

Gov. Doc.  
Can  
Ad

Canada Agric. Dept.

# HOW TO CAPONIZE

BY

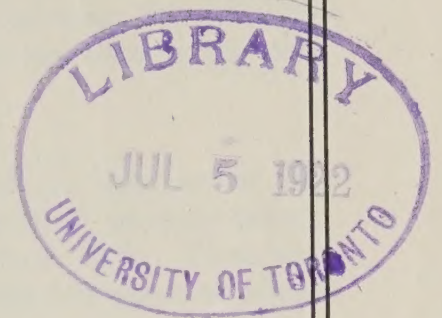
GEO. ROBERTSON

ASSISTANT DOMINION POULTRY HUSBANDMAN

AND

W. W. LEE

POULTRY HUSBANDMAN



Cockerels ready for Caponizing.

DOMINION OF CANADA  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
**PAMPHLET No. 12—NEW SERIES**

THE EXPERIMENTAL FARMS BRANCH

E. S. ARCHIBALD, B.A., B.S.A., DIRECTOR

Published by Direction of the Hon. W. R. MOTHERWELL, Minister of Agriculture,  
Ottawa, 1922







## HOW TO CAPONIZE

Caponizing, or the emasculation of cockerels, is an ancient custom. In recent times it has not been practised to an extent that might reasonably have been expected, though it is fairly common in France, and more recently has gained favour in the United States. In Canada it is still not in common use, although fast gaining ground.

The advantage of caponizing is that the operation tends to increase the quantity of the flesh, and at the same time retains the quality to a greater age than is the case with cockerels.

### BEST BREEDS AND AGE AT WHICH TO CAPONIZE

Any breed of fowl may be caponized, but those best suited, on account of the commercial demand for large capons, are the heavy weight or general purpose breeds such as the Brahmas, Wyandottes, Plymouth Rocks or Rhode Island Reds. However, for home use and for certain trades, the light weight breeds as Leghorns make excellent capons.

The best age at which to caponize is when the birds are from two to three months old or before the sex instinct is pronounced. In every case the operation should be performed before the sexual proclivities appear.

### INSTRUMENTS, ETC.

In the older days, and even to-day, in parts of France, the farmer uses the nail of his little finger—which is purposely let grow long—for caponizing, but proper tools which are much more efficient, and yet not costly, are now available. They consist of a small surgical knife, a spreader, a steel hook and probe and forceps.

In addition, a bowl of weak disinfecting solution, absorbent cotton, and two pieces of stout twine with weight attached, are needed. Special caponizing tables, which may be adjusted to any angle, and provided with sliding springs for holding the bird in position, may be purchased, but an entirely satisfactory and simple operating table may be constructed of two pieces of dressed board about 20 inches long by 12 inches wide. These are hinged at one end, the hinges being set in about an inch from each side. Along the edge of one of the boards, finishing nails are driven at intervals of about 2 inches allowing the nails to project about 1 inch. This board will form the top of the table. A block is used between the two boards so that the top may be elevated to any angle desired. This "table" is placed on top of a box or barrel or other support, at a height to suit the operator.

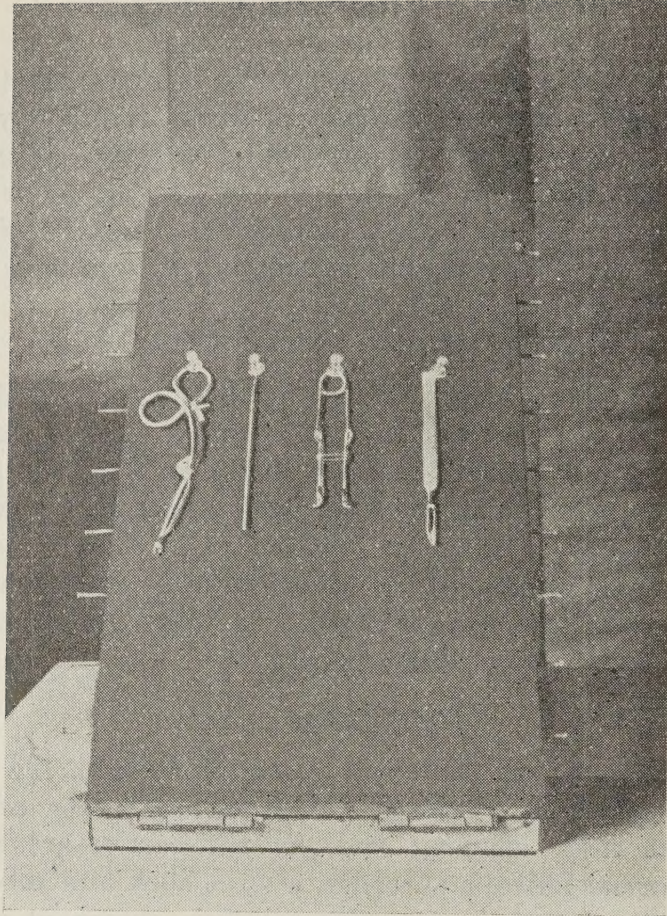
### THE OPERATION

The cockerels to be operated on should be starved for from thirty-six to forty-eight hours. Water may be supplied during this period, as it will aid in clearing the intestines.

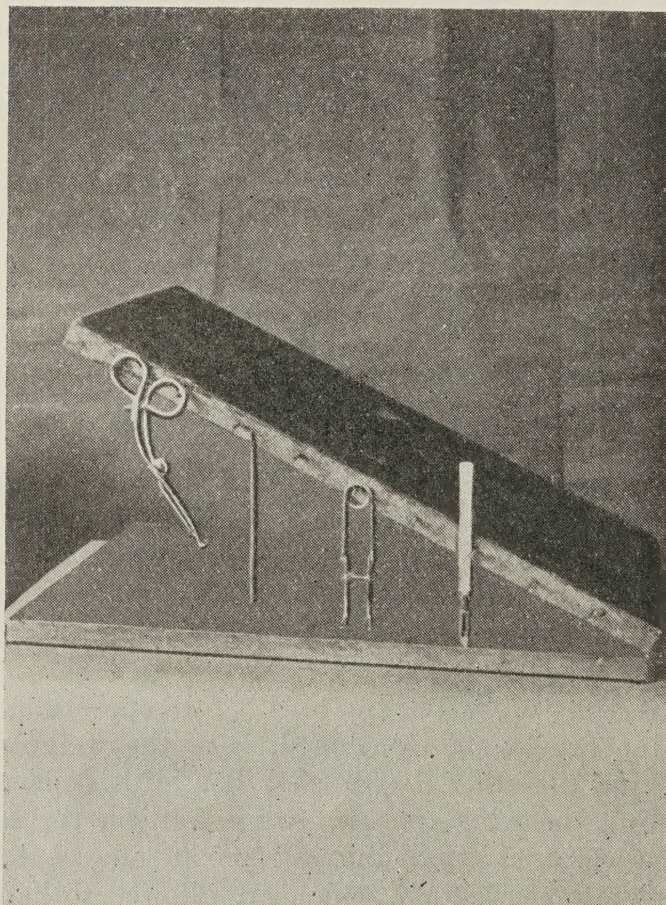
Whenever possible, caponizing should be done outdoors on a bright, sunny day, preferably between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sunlight will strike almost directly above the operating table and into the abdominal cavity. After making sure that all the necessary tools are ready and handy, the cockerels are brought from the pen, in a crate, with another crate handy in which to place them after they are caponized.

Naturally, it is necessary to fasten the bird before operating, and for this purpose the two pieces of twine previously mentioned, with the weights attached, are used one for tying the legs and the other the wings. The bird is placed on the table on its side, the string fastening the wings passed over a nail on the edge of the table, and the other fastening the legs over a nail in the opposite side of the table, at a sufficient distance and angle so that the weights, which are allowed to hang free on either side of the table, serve the double purpose of keeping the bird motionless and stretching the body as much as possible. The feathers on the flank, covering the last two ribs





Caponizing instruments and table.

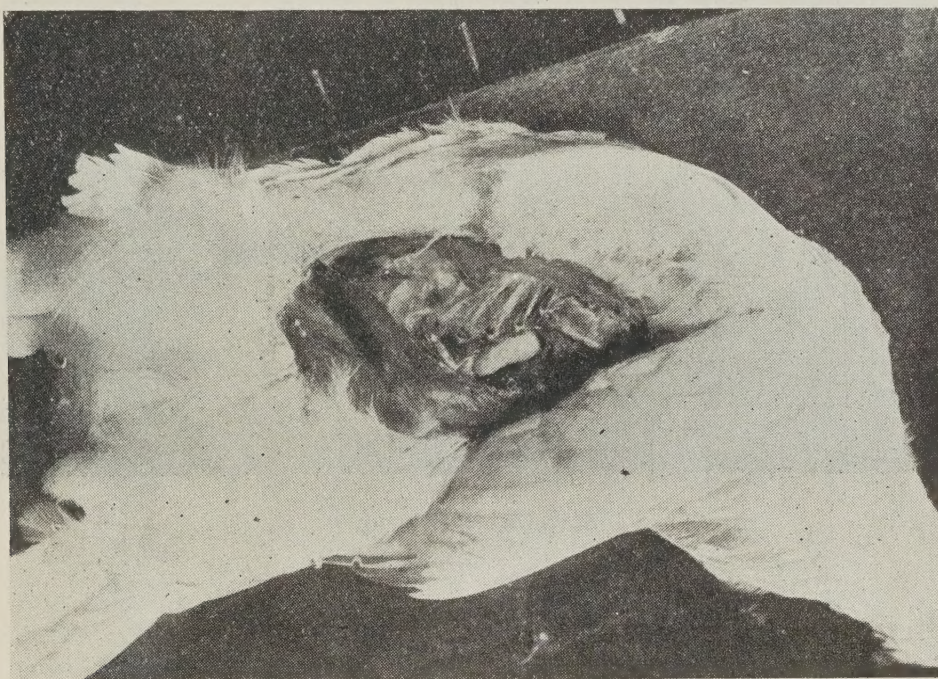


Caponizing instruments and table.



are then plucked, and the surrounding feathers flattened down and the bare skin washed by means of a sponge soaked in the disinfecting solution.

The last two ribs must now be located, for it is between these that the opening is made, and the skin stretched tightly towards the hip, being held there by the thumb, until the incision is made and the spreader inserted. By this means, when the operation is over, the skin in resuming its natural position, will entirely cover the flesh wound. The back of the bird should be towards the operator, the knife inserted between the two last ribs, about an inch and a half below the back bone, and an incision made about a half of an inch long by a clean firm stroke of the knife towards



Section of body showing position of testicles

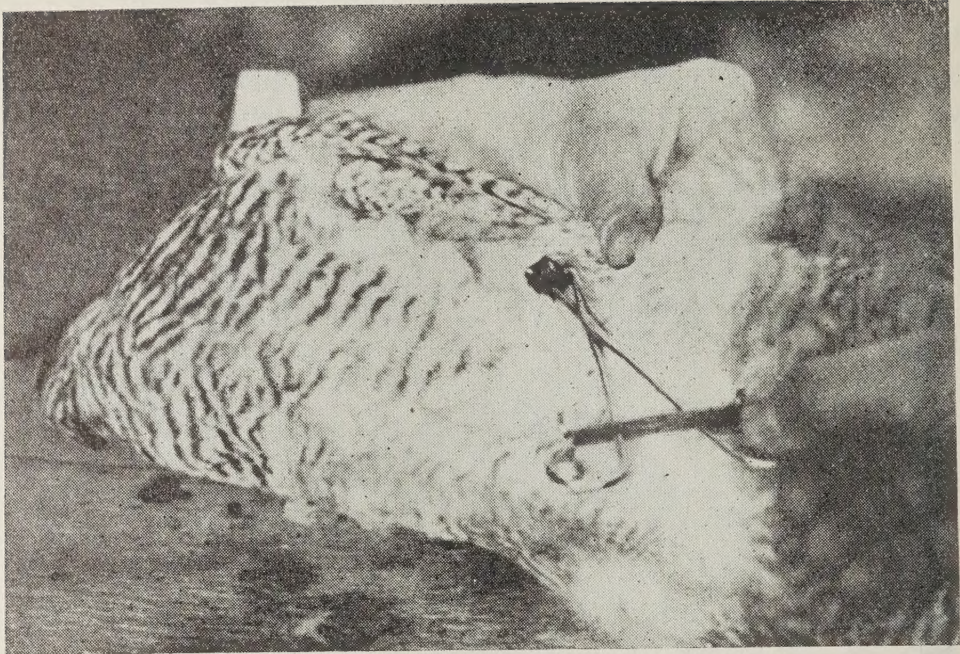
the operator. The spreader is then inserted, and adjusted so as to make an opening sufficiently large through which to work. A thin tissue like skin will now be perceived covering the intestines, and this must be torn away by means of the small hook attached to the probe. This skin is in two layers, and both of these must be perforated in order to expose the intestines.

The testicles—of which there are two, one on each side, of a light yellowish colour, the same shape and usually about the size of a small bean,—should now be visible attached lightly to the covering of the spine and lying near the ribs. If it is not in view, the intestines may be gently pushed aside with the probe, until it can be located.

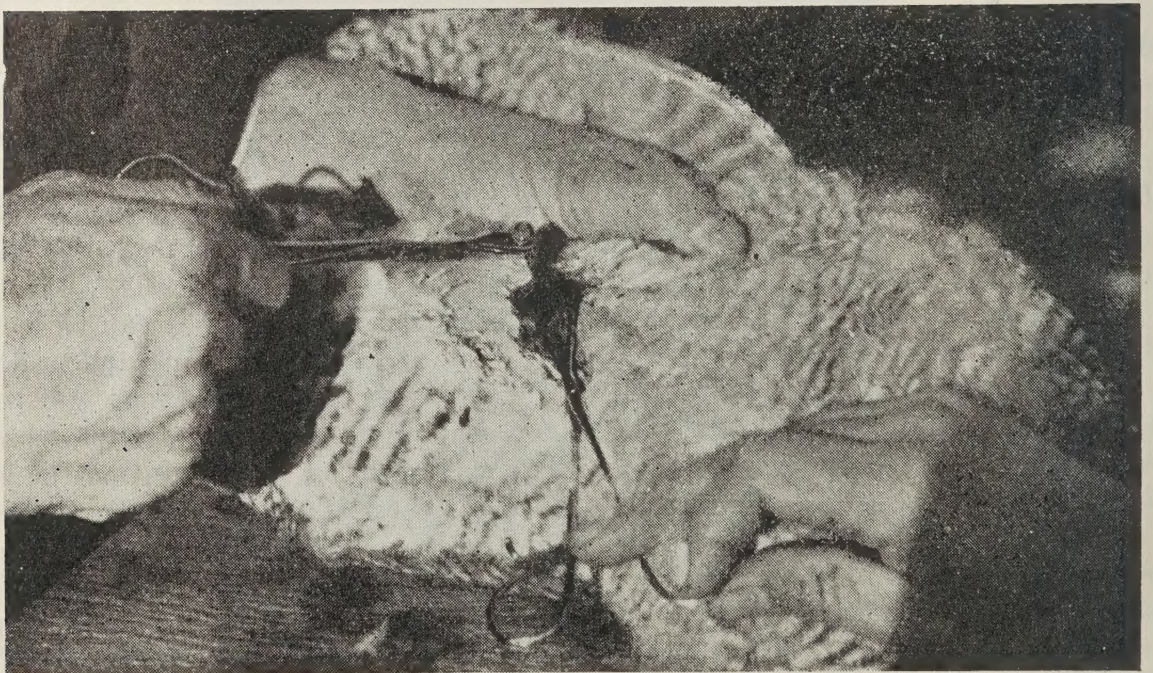
The forceps are now used to grasp the testicle firmly, care being taken not to seize the artery immediately above it, for if this is ruptured a hemorrhage will result, and the bird will soon bleed to death. The forceps being closed, the testicle is withdrawn, the ligaments by which it is attached being twisted two or three times in doing so. The ligaments usually give way readily, but if they do not, when the testicle is clear of the opening, they may be severed about half an inch below it. The spreader is now taken out, the bird placed on its other side, and the operation repeated. There should be little or no bleeding, but in the event of there being any, it can be stopped by applying a piece of absorbent cotton. Some operators remove both testicles from the one side, but this is not advisable.

Generally speaking, the birds suffer little during the operation, and the wounds heal very rapidly. Until they are healed, however, it is advisable to feed the capons almost entirely on mash and liquid, and to keep them in a pen supplied with plenty of soft litter. It sometimes occurs, that a few days after the operation, air puffs appear under the skin near the wounds; these are not serious, and can easily be pricked to let the air out.






Spreader inserted.



Testicle withdrawn





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024 with funding from  
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761120005079>

